

of unpaid leave each year to care for themselves or a seriously ill family member. For the first time, employees could meet their responsibility to their loved ones without risking their jobs. It was landmark legislation—the first bill signed into law by President Clinton in 1993—and tens of millions of families are healthier and more secure because of it.

But for millions of Americans, the ability to meet their family health needs is still out of reach. Most American families can't afford to take unpaid leave because it means they will miss even one weekly paycheck. They need every week's income to meet the rent, pay the electricity bill, and feed their families. A serious illness shouldn't mean choosing between caring for a sick child, spouse or parent, or suffering a financial catastrophe.

That is why I strongly support the Family Leave Insurance Act. This legislation will fill a serious gap in the Nation's health policy. It builds on the Family and Medical Leave Act by providing a safety net for the average working family.

Under this vital legislation, employees would be eligible for up to 8 weeks of paid benefits while they care for their families. With such benefits, workers would not be forced to choose between the families they love and the paychecks they need.

Most important, the program targets the employers and workers who will most benefit from the program. Lower income workers, who are least able to afford time off from their jobs, would be eligible for up to 100 percent of their weekly income. Smaller employers would have the option to participate—and would receive special incentives for doing so.

This is an idea whose time has come. California has led the way with its paid leave program, which has been a great success. Other State legislatures around the country are considering it as well.

The Family Leave Insurance Act is just one of the important new policies we should adopt to help America's working families. We also need to address the nearly half of American workers who don't receive paid sick days at work—and millions more who cannot take paid time off to care for their families.

That is why I will continue to fight for the Healthy Families Act, which will provide up to 7 paid sick days a year to workers, to help them meet immediate and short-term health needs not covered by the Federal Leave Insurance Act.

I commend my colleagues, Senator DODD and Senator STEVENS, for their leadership on this issue. This legislation, together with the Healthy Families Act, removes the risk that a sudden illness in the family will devastate a worker's financial well-being. Hardworking American families deserve no less.

I urge my colleagues to support the Family Leave Insurance Act.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the plague of gun violence is one that affects our society on many levels. Across the country people are calling out for a change in our Nation's gun policies. A recent article, *The Battle Over Illegal Guns*, in the June issue of *Ladies' Home Journal Magazine*, is a case in point. This article detailed the tragic death of Wake County, NC sheriff's department investigator Mark Tucker, and provided yet another example of a pervasive problem in our country that has not yet been addressed.

On February 12, 2004, Mark Tucker returned home from work to eat lunch. As he left his house to return to work, he noticed an unfamiliar car with an open trunk parked in a field near his home. He drove over to investigate it. As he stepped out of his unmarked patrol car, an 18-year-old young man pulled a gun out of the trunk of the unfamiliar car. The teenager, who was on probation for breaking into cars, stated he had only intended to engage in a little target practice that day. However, because he was on probation, he was not legally allowed to possess a firearm. When he saw Mark's badge he panicked, killing Mark with a single shot.

Because the teenager had a felony record, he was not legally permitted to purchase a gun himself. In order to circumvent this, he simply had a friend fill out the required Federal paperwork for him at the gun dealer. This type of transaction, when one customer stands in for another who is not legally able to purchase a weapon, is known as a straw purchase. According to a 2000 report by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF, straw purchases are the most common source of crime guns. Approximately half of the 1,530 trafficking investigations examined in the report involved stand-in buyers.

Though Federal law enforcement officials have increasingly teamed up with local officials over the past few years to increase prosecution of firearm-related crimes, not enough attention is being focused on the source of the problem. According to the ATF, nearly 60 percent of the guns used in crimes can be traced to just over 1 percent of this Nation's licensed gun dealers. Five out of six of these guns are obtained illegally.

This article not only detailed the tragic events which occurred in Wake County, it illustrated a problem that plagues our society. Negligent dealers and straw purchasers indirectly threaten the security of our communities by facilitating the transfer of dangerous firearms to potential criminals who may use them in violent crimes. We must do more to help our Federal, State and local law enforcement officials keep guns out of the hands of those who shouldn't have them. Simply put, Congress needs to take up and pass sensible gun legislation.

IRAN

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the international community's effort to press Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment has been virtually grounded as of late and there does not seem to be a way out. This deadlock is of great concern to me—particularly because of the threat Iran poses to our national security strategy but also because I do not trust this administration to make the right choices when it comes to our safety and security.

As a known sponsor of international terrorism, and in light of President Ahmadinejad's belligerent statements calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map," we must redouble our efforts to ensure Iran is no longer allowed to violate international treaties, does not develop nuclear weapons, and does not become any more of a threat to our national security than it already is.

History has taught us that we cannot ignore the stated intent of those who seek to destroy other nations. A nuclear Iran would be a grave threat to the region, to Israel, and to the entire international community but that does not mean we should act rashly or act alone. Indeed, recent history has also shown that we are at our strongest—and most secure—when we are part of a strong multilateral team.

And yet, the Bush administration's saber-rattling flies in the face of any effort to legitimately build consensus for effective dealings with Iran. Our allies at the United Nations have worked with us in the past to support a resolution sanctioning Iran but they may not be willing to work with us again if these confrontations in the Persian Gulf become habitual occurrences. Such threats are stunningly counterproductive as they embolden Iranian hardliners to dig in their heels, undermine our multilateral commitments, and jeopardize our national security significantly.

Iran's ability to sniff out and exploit fissures within the international community and use it to their advantage should not be underestimated. Knowing this, it is in the interest of our national security to ensure there is strong unanimity among our allies at the United Nations. Critical to this effort is cooperation from Russia and China. To ensure they are on board, this administration must prioritize robust diplomacy with these two countries to ensure they are on board and engaged. Without them, there can be no real headway.

Just last month an International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, report said that Iran has not suspended its enrichment activities and we must take this claim very seriously. We must work with our allies to take concerted, decisive action to break this stalemate. The Security Council must speak with one voice and send a clear signal that continued defiance of the international community will not be tolerated.